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ABSTRACT

The life of Thomas Paine had been one of constant failure and misfortune until he arrived in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) where he rose to fame as the politically astute author of "Common Sense." Published in January 1776, "Common Sense" called for the colonies' independence from England and was written in the simple, unrestrained, and frank language which characterized Paine's writing style and appeal and made it comprehensible to the average citizen. He continued to produce essays throughout the War whenever pessimism seemed pervasive and morale was low. These essays became known as the "Crisis Papers." After the Revolutionary War, Paine turned to engineering and designed an iron bridge. He carried his plans to France and was soon caught up in the French Revolution. Written during the French revolution, his next two books, "Rights of Man" and "Kingship," which became "Rights of Man No. II," attacked monarcharies, the aristocracy, and organized religion, while the second book also proposed a welfare system for the poor. Paine later drifted into obscurity and died alone in 1809. (DJC)

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THOMAS PAINE

An Englishman Who Became An American Patriot

Thomas M. Scanlon

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T H O M A S P A I N E

An Englishman Who Became An American Patriot

In November 1774, just as our revolutionary war was about to start, a 37-year-old Englishman arrived in this country, broke, and not knowing a single person in America. Neither did any single American know him. In England he had failed at the only regular jobs he ever held, as a staymaker and as an excise collector. A little more than a year later he was recognized as an American hero by almost all Americans and was known throughout the western world as the single most powerful political spokesman for the American Revolution. That man was Thomas Paine, whose Common Sense and The Crisis Papers made him loved in America and respected by most of the literate world.

That he has not received the praise and recognition many believe he deserves for his contribution to the revolutionary cause is undoubtedly because two widely read early biographers both wrote with the sole intent and purpose of discrediting him, and unfortunately much of the falsity, half truths and mean inuendos from the poison pens of these two evil doers has been reiterated as fact by subsequent biographers, placing Paine in a false and unflattering light.

Admittedly Paine was opinionated and sometimes irascible, particularly in his mature years. He drank regularly and at times too much. He sometimes imposed on his friends. Although he always maintained the purity of his mind and the nobility of his objectives, he apparently sometimes gave less care to his body and physical appearance. But these neither uncommon nor the most serious of human faults should not deprive him of the place he otherwise deserves in the history of the period. Perhaps Paine's autobiography would have helped us to make a fairer assessment of his life but it was accidentally destroyed by fire shortly after his death.

Some subsequent biographers have given us more reliable information concerning his early life than had been available before. He was born January 29, 1737, into a poor family in a town of only 2000 inhabitants called Thetford, in England, where he said his father, a devout Quaker, gave him a good moral training. He never expresssed affection for his mother, the daughter of an attorney, who was eleven years older than his father and who was reputed to have been somewhat of a shrew. Both parents, but particularly his father, recognized his intelligence and at some sacrifice paid for his seven years of grammar school, where he displayed an ability with words, even writing some poetry, and an aptitude for mathematics and science, but a strong aversion to Latin, which he refused to

study. Because that subject was the sine qua non to move him higher in the social scale, at age thirteen his schooling ended and like his father he became a stay maker.

But stay making had little to offer a restless boy with a lively mind. He was "rescued" by his father when he first attempted to exchange the boredom of stay making for what he thought would be a romantic life at sea, but on his second attempt when he was twenty his father did not intervene. But life at sea on a British war vessel proved to be too rough for Tom, forcing him to return to stay making. This time he had made the break from home and went to work for a stay maker in London where for two years he was able to attend lectures on mathematics and science, including astronomy. Perhaps his first real intellectual awakening occurred during this period.

Anxious to be independent, he borrowed money and opened his own stay shop in Sandwich. There he married a lady's maid named Mary Lambert. But within a short time the shop was bankrupt, Mary had died, probably in child birth, and like many another person who has failed on his own, he was forced to return home for support. This misadventure indicated, what subsequently became well established, he had no aptitude for business.

That opportunities for him were limited is shown by the fact that he then spent a full year studying to take an examination to become an excise collector despite its very low pay plus his and the general low regard for the occupation. The examination, testing skill in mathematics and an ability to write well, fortuitously exactly his strengths, was easy for Tom. But forcing others to pay taxes was not so easy for him. His inspector found that he had stamped the records of some merchants as though the taxes had been paid without having made certain that the taxes had actually been paid. This resulted in his discharge.

Then followed a period during which Paine briefly, and apparently unsuccessfully, tried both teaching and preaching. Finally in desperation he was forced to beg to be reinstated as an excise collector. Upon being reinstated, Paine, then thirty-one, began his six years residency in Lewes where he took a room in the home of Samuel Ollive, a tobacconist. Because Ollive was an elected constable of the town and because he liked young Tom and during the six years discussed all the town's business with him, Tom learned every detail of the governance of a town, giving him a valuable practical political experience. At the same time his theoretical interests were stimulated and widened by the almost nightly-held friendly and challenging debates at the White Horse Inn "where politics were

discussed, ideas exchanged, healths drunk and literary effusions produced". In Lewes Paine became much respected for his skill as a political debater, a sharp wit, a clever poet, great ice skater and sailor. He was also reputed to have displayed an affinity for blond prostitutes.

When Mr. Ollive died, at Mrs. Ollive's suggestion Paine, who by that time had been helping manage the store, entered into a "marriage of convenience" with the Ollive daughter, Elizabeth, ten years his junior, which marriage Paine always asserted was never consummated for personal reasons, the nature of which he refused to divulge.

Convinced the excise collectors were grossly underpaid, Paine in early 1774 began devoting much of his time to the writing of what might be called a brief urging Parliament to raise the salary of all excise men. Writing and working for what he deemed to be such a good cause was so much more exciting and satisfying to him than performing his excise collector duties which he increasingly found, in addition to the inadequate pay, to be distasteful, particularly because he saw so many avoiding the tax by smuggling, that he lost his excise job for the second time. Parliament probably paid little attention to Paine's polemic for the excise men but Oliver Goldsmith and other writers did, resulting in the first recognition of Tom as a writer.

Paine separated from his wife, turned over to her or his creditors all his possessions, and with no means of support, he moved to London where somehow he managed to attend more lectures on scientific subjects and to do some writing, both in prose and poetry. This brought him to the attention of Benjamin Franklin, which was probably the luckiest and most important event in his life. Their common interest in science and politics stimulated a warm friendship and mutual respect which continued until Franklin's death. Franklin, applying the sage wisdom for which he was famous, recognized not only Paine's unusual ability as a writer but also that his free spirit would more likely thrive in young and comparatively classless America than in old and class divided England. To help he gave Paine a letter of introduction to his son-in-law* in Philadelphia and some say enough money to pay his passage to America.

Tom probably unburdened his soul to Franklin: his life to that point had been full of disappointments, unhappiness and depression. He was confident he had a good mind, a talent for writing and for science but he felt hopelessly locked into poverty and a menial life by the unyielding rigidity of the English class system. He hated stay making and excise

* Some say it was to his nephew.

collecting for what they were, and more important, because he was convinced they would never lead to the kind of life which he felt confident that with his talents, given any reasonable opportunity, he could achieve. He also had acquired a deep sympathy for others who, like himself, believed themselves oppressed. The more he was distressed by his own misfortune and that of others similarly situated the more his hatred grew for the institutions and individuals whom he considered responsible for that oppression.

With no money, no friend, with nothing but Franklin's letter, he arrived in America, in the fall of 1774. There he found a completely different world: very little class distinction, land in large supply, many successful independent farmers and artisans, opportunity for everyone and most important the citizens were demonstrating their independence by revolting against England, the very government that he blamed for his own distress. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder Paine loved this country from the start and immediately embraced its cause. It was truly a phenomenon that within little more a year he became a hero to every American and became recognized throughout the literate world as one of the most influential political writers of the period.

During the long voyage to America, Paine had written an

hypothetical dialogue between an American and a British general. As soon after his arrival as he recovered from an attack of malaria, (some biographers say it was typhus), which had been an epidemic on the boat, he promptly offered his dialogue to a man named Aiken (or Aitken, I find it spelled both ways), who not only published it, but liked it so well that Paine became an editor of Aiken's new "Pennsylvania Magazine".

The subject matter of just a few of his magazine articles written during approximately eighteen months of his editorship reveal the modernity of his thoughts, his outrage at injustice, his freedom from prejudice and his burning desire to help the oppressed. He proposed the adoption of a plan which he had carefully worked out, comparable to the United Nations Charter, for the arbitration of international disputes. A very early harbinger of woman's liberation, he wrote of man's abuse and exploitation of women and suggested the most modern ideas for marriage, divorce and the rights of women in general. He condemned slavery as an evil and immoral institution. He declared all negroes should be free citizens with all rights of citizenship. He declared dueling was immoral and should be made illegal. He asserted there was no rational basis for royal, ecclesiatical or hereditary privileges and these all should be abolished. He urged more humane treatment of

animals. He also wrote on scientific subjects, including descriptions of the mechanisms of threshing and spinning machines which were then unknown in America. Anyone reading the full panoply of Tom's articles for the magazine might well wonder if there lived any other thinker or author of that period more advanced in his political thinking or more dedicated to establishing justice and equal rights for all human beings regardless of race, class or position.

Remarkable as the subject matter and modernity of the ideas expressed in his magazine articles were, it was his powerful political essays which were written in support of the revolution which made him famous. Almost all of these were written after his magazine articles. Strange as it now seems, although open hostilities had existed in America since Concord and Lexington, apparently no influential writer had, throughout the entire year of 1775, publicly argued that America should declare its complete independence from England. While many thoughtful citizens might have been thinking and perhaps giving verbal expression to the same thoughts as Paine came to express, not one of them appears to have had the conviction and courage to have published them publicly. Many, perhaps even most, influential leaders, including Franklin and John Adams, had such deep admiration for the British government and its empire that they continued to hope for a reconciliation because they firmly believed that

America's future would be best tied to Britain. Before Paine appeared on the scene, American pamphleteers wrote exclusively in stilted language for the educated class and never unequivocally sounded a clear call for independence.

Perhaps Americans were thirsting for words like Paine's. In any event the call for freedom and independence could not have been put in more timely and eloquent emotion-evoking words than Tom Paine wrote in his COMMON SENSE* published anonymously as "Written by an Englishman" in January, 1776. Paine's bugle call was in language which was perfect for its purpose, a kind of political writing that Americans had not seen before. Its style was just the antithesis of the formal mode which was then the popular custom. Paine's language was simple, unrestrained and brutally frank, pitched for the eyes and ears of the average citizen. Any American citizen, regardless of his status or lack of education, who could read or who could have COMMON SENSE read to him, could understand Paine completely and could respond to his message, and almost all Americans did. As one historian has said, the "impact of that book on the American Revolution was comparable to that of Uncle Tom's Cabin on the Civil War".

* Paine signed Common Sense as the writer. Since then, the essay has been known as Common Sense as though Paine had given it that title.

In COMMON SENSE Paine devastatingly castigated the British government and institutions. For example, in contrast to the deference, almost reverence, shown for George III by American writers, Paine wrote "The only King the Colonists would know is God. He reigns above, and does not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Great Britain". With simple but logical argument he completely destroyed the concept of monarchy. He did so both on the basis of natural rights as well as on the basis of the scriptures. He emphasized the latter knowing that emphasis would win some converts when natural rights would not. His writing was peppered with aphorisms such as "in absolute governments the King is the law, so in free countries the law ought to be King". He argued persuasively that no generation had a right to impose its choice of government on subsequent generations. He asserted America would have been much better off if it had never had any connection with England or any other foreign power. America didn't need the help of any other country and therefore America should promptly declare its complete independence from England and should immediately adopt a constitution for Americans based on government by consent of the governed.

Paine appeared to have come to this country with some mysterious a priori understanding of and sympathy for the many

concerns which were worrying Americans at the time, just as though he had been living with those concerns himself. He also seemed to have the singular ability to touch exactly the right chords, appeal to just the right emotions to cause Americans to respond to his urging that they declare their independence. His success in doing so is becoming more and more recognized as a very rare political and literary accomplishment.

Many of Paine's statements such as "natural rights are the foundation of all civil rights" and "A government of our own is our natural right" sounded very much like they came from Locke, but Paine repeatedly asserted that he had never read a word of Locke or for that matter any other philosopher. He asserted he never read anyone's writings but his own, of which he immodestly admitted he had memorized large portions which purportedly he frequently quoted.

COMMON SENSE became more widely read throughout the world than any other publication of the period, spreading the spirit of revolution. Almost any other writer in Paine's position would have made a fortune from the publication of COMMON SENSE alone. But Paine, demonstrating extraordinary generosity and a singular sense of public service, stated that since he had written COMMON SENSE as a public service he should not benefit in any way from its publication, and he didn't. To encourage

wide spread distribution of his message Paine allowed the publisher to retain half of the profits; the other half he gave to the army. Although he was always in poverty, at least throughout the war period, Paine took the same unselfish and altruistic position with respect to all his political writings. All of them were published widely throughout America and most of Europe and any one of them could probably have made him financially independent. Finding any other public figure whose unselfish dedication to public service exceeds that would be very difficult.

Although it brought him no financial benefits, the spectacular success of COMMON SENSE did bring Paine a confidence and a status he never had the pleasure of experiencing before. He was now accepted as an equal by the leaders in Philadelphia. Almost overnight he became recognized as the spokesman for the American Revolution. Thereafter on every occasion during the long and mostly discouraging years that the war dragged on, when pessimism seemed pervasive and morale almost non-existent, it was Paine who always responded with just the right essay breathing optimism, confidence and victory. Each of them imbued soldiers and citizens alike with new determination to persevere until freedom had been established. He dedicated all his energy and talent to

America's cause although he knew his only reward would be his deep satisfaction of knowing that he was striking blows for liberty. These writings are his so-called "THE CRISIS PAPERS" which many consider to be Paine's finest political writings, rivalling in their excellence those of any other time including the best speeches and writings of Churchill and Roosevelt during World War II.

The first was written in December, 1776, when morale of citizens and soldiers was at one of its lowest levels. After the Declaration of Independence was signed, which Paine, perhaps with some justification, firmly believed was in part the consequence of his COMMON SENSE, Paine had joined the army and was with it on the dreary retreat of that winter. It was then that Washington wrote to his brother one of his saddest letters of the war: "I am wearied almost to death . . ." If we don't get a new enlistment "I think the game will be pretty near up, as, from disaffection and want of spirit and fortitude, the inhabitants, instead of resistance, are offering submission, and taking protection from General Howe in Jersey".

During the dismal retreat, Paine saw despair in the eyes of almost every citizen he passed. He saw the morale of the soldiers fade as one after another soldier deserted and went

home. He knew then it was time for him to take up his pen. Writing on a drumhead while still on the retreat, he capsulized his feelings in the opening paragraph of his Crisis Paper No. 1 with the now famous lines:

> "These are the days that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot, in this crisis shrink from the service of their country; but he who stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

He continued with:

> "I love the man that can smile in trouble, that gathers strength from distress and grows brave by reflection. It is the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles until death."

He praised the surviving soldiers for their courage and endurance demonstrated on the long retreat, reviled the English King, excoriated the American Tories of which there were many, and begged for a loyal response from all Americans. To carry his spirit-lifting words to every citizen and soldier as soon as possible, Paine, immediately after the paper was finished, rode to Philadelphia with his manuscript and engaged three printers to print and distribute it as soon as possible. The impact of Crisis No. 1 on citizens and soldiers alike is said to have been tremendous. After he read it, Washington,

according to one scholar, said to Paine, "I intend to command a surprise attack on the Hessian force across the Delaware below Trenton, Mr. Paine, and shall order your Crisis read aloud to every corporal's guard before it begins. It will hearten them as nothing else would". As you know, Washington's surprise attack was a success and Paine's writing was considered to have been a very substantial factor in that early and much needed victory.

To encourage the widest possible circulation of all the CRISIS PAPERS, Paine permitted each printer to charge no more than two coppers for each copy. In each of the subsequent papers Paine wrote on what he deemed to be the most crucial problem of the moment. When it became obvious that many Americans, Tories and even others, were not supporting the war effort, he urged the adoption of a mandatory loyalty oath and later a universal draft. When unreasonable critics began to carp at Washington, demanding he be relieved of his command, Paine's persuasive pen came to Washington's defense quieting the critics. After the British had spent years and many pounds and still had not secured an American surrender, he wrote to convince the British government it could never defeat America and it would be better off if it abandoned the attempt. Knowing many English citizens still felt kindly toward the Colonists, he wrote to convince the English citizens of the

venality of their government's treatment of Americans. Although reared as a Quaker himself, he attacked the pacificism of the Quakers when he thought their influence was adversely affecting the war effort. When some Americans dispaired of ever defeating the British he wrote with confidence that France was about to come to America's aid and the British would surely be defeated soon. Whatever message was needed to bolster morale and maintain the revolutionary spirit, Paine was there with his dynamic pen and all loyal Americans loved him for it.

Believing Paine's talents would be more usefully employed other than as a soldier, and being well aware that as a result of his unselfish altruism he had nothing to live on, some of his friends secured for him an appointment as Secretary to the Committee of the Continental Congress on Foreign Affairs, for which he was to receive the modest annual salary of $1,000. Shortly after Paine received the appointment in the year 1779, Washington wrote a long report to Congress in which he set out in grim detail the distress and suffering of his soldiers resulting from the lack of financial support from the Congress. As part of his duties as Secretary Paine was required to read Washington's letter aloud to the members of Congress assembled. Knowing full well how Congress had repeatedly ignored similar requests for funds from Washington, Paine was confident that even Washington's graphic description

of the suffering of the soldiers would probably not motivate the members to draft requisitions on the states. He immediately, upon completing the reading of the letter, withdrew his full annual salary of $1,000 and gave half of it as the first contribution to establish a fund, to which he begged others to contribute, to be used exclusively for Washington's soldiers. Any citizen of wealth, even if he had only a spark of patriotism, knowing what Paine had done, should have been shamed into doing something for the cause, and many did. While it is unlikely that any matched Paine's extraordinary patriotism by giving half of his annual income, $300,000 was quickly raised. It was about this time, probably in recognition of his contributions to America's cause, that the University of Pennsylvania awarded Paine a masters degree.

Paine's patriotism and unselfishness was an embarrassing contrast to the lack of patriotism and selfishness of some native Americans. One of the worst of these was Silas Deane. At a time when England, France and Spain were not at war, Louis XVI of France and Charles III of Spain agreed secretly to give two million livres to America's war effort. To avoid irritating England with the true facts the gift was to be camouflaged as a normal business transaction between Deane, a Connecticut delegate, and one Beaumarchais* of France. When it

* Later the author of The Barber of Seville and The Marriage of Figaro.

was discovered that these two characters had embezzled the silver, Deane asserted that no such gift had ever been made. Although Paine as Secretary of the Secret Committee had acquired knowledge of the true facts in confidence, he was so outraged by Deane's malfeasance that he could not resist using that knowledge in the public debate over the issue which ensued.

Because Paine had revealed the true facts which contradicted France's official position, Paine's statements became an embarrassment to the French government in its relations with England. The French government demanded that the Continental Congress issue a retraction of Paine's statements. Congress, feeling compelled to pacify France, proceeded to publicly disavow Paine's statements. This resulted in immediate and wide criticism of Paine and finally the loss of his job as Secretary of the Committee.

Paine, needing something to live on, accepted a clerkship with a small stipend with the Pennsylvania Assembly, but typically he almost immediately resigned to take a non-paying job acting as secretary to his friend John Laurens, who was also being sent to France to beg for money from Louis XVI. Laurens and Paine returned with two and a half million in half silver livres. Paine somehow paid his own expenses. After the trip, he was rescued from poverty by the Continental Congress

itself, which arranged a stipend of $800 a year, for which he was to write articles in support of the Continental government's war activities.

It was at this time that Joel Barlow, the great American poet and politician, said "the great American cause owed as much to the pen of Paine as to the sword of Washington". And Edmund Randolph, governor of Virginia, "ascribed independence primarily to George III but next to Thomas Paine". From England Cobbett opined "it was Mr. Paine, and Mr. Paine alone, who brought those (democratic) principles in action".

By this time it appeared likely the war would be won. While always altruistic in refusing to accept any compensation for his main writings, Paine then began to believe the country should reward him in some way for his contribution in winning that war. He felt that he had talents equal if not superior to the affluent men with whom he now associated and that he deserved to live a little like they did, particularly since many of them had even added to their wealth during the war. In response to his complaints and in recognition of his contributions to the Revolution, in April, 1784, the State of New York deeded Paine a small farm in New Rochelle which had been confiscated from a Tory. The Virginia Assembly turned down strong efforts to reward him similarly even when made by

Madison, Washington and other influential Virginians, but in December 1784 Pennsylvania awarded him 500 pounds and in October of 1785 the Continental Congress itself gave him $3,000 which he accepted, although he thought it very niggardly.

Feeling more financially secure than he had ever felt before and believing that he had now completed his part toward winning the war Paine allowed himself to turn all his attention to his engineering efforts. Being convinced he had developed a new and novel concept for a single arch iron bridge which would revolutionize bridge building throughout the world, he devoted all his energies for almost two years to the development of the model for such a bridge, of which he did seem to be the genuine inventor. Failing to secure any financing in America for the bridge project, Paine sailed for France and England carrying the model of his iron bridge with him.

In France he received a hero's welcome and his bridge received a favorable report from the Academy of Science. Although his good friends LaFayette and Jefferson both made a strenuous effort to get the French government to build one of Paine's iron bridges over the Seine, none was ever built. By the spring of 1790 others had stolen Paine's idea of the iron bridge, had built one with success, and refused to pay Paine for his claimed ideas. By that time Paine was convinced that

England was preparing for war with France and he again turned his attention to political writings.

Paine was now famous and wherever he went he met with all the important people. Even in England he met with the most influential government officials, including Burke. Burke craftily hoped by continuing his friendly relations with Paine he might be able to exploit Paine's great popularity in America and his very effective pen to aid England in its attempt to reopen American markets and also to dissuade him from spreading his revolutionary ideas in England. As soon as he became convinced that his attempt to accomplish either objective was futile, although he had been more sympathetic to America's democratic cause than other members of the British government, Burke promptly began work on a book in which he defended all aspects of the British government and religion and attacked the basic concepts of government by democracy in general and the French revolution in particular. He apparently wrote in an effort to so condition the minds of English citizens that they would not be receptive to Paine's much-feared revolutionary writings.

When Burke's book attacking the French Revolution finally was published, Paine composed his response, a powerful polemic against all monarchies entitled "RIGHTS OF MAN". The two books

spoke from and for opposite ends of the political spectrum. Burke's book was in beautiful formal English, glorifying British institutions, government and religion, written for readers of Britain's governing class. Paine's response was an egalitarian espousal of the democratic spirit, critical of that governing class with vicious attacks on the British monarchy, government and church in language for readers who were among the governed. Paine wisely gave his book threshold status by dedicating it to Washington, who was then President of the United States.

Like COMMON SENSE, "RIGHTS OF MAN" was an immediate big seller in England, America and France. In an attempt to suppress it the British government first tried to buy the rights to the manuscript for a thousand pounds. Failing in that it paid five hundred pounds to a government employee named Chalmers to discredit Paine by publishing what purported to be a factual biography but which was described by one scholar as "one of the most horrible collections of abuse which even that venal day produced". It portrayed Paine as deceitful, untrustworthy, egotistical, uncouth and a drunkard. Although Chalmers never saw Pennsylvania and never had a masters degree, he caused the "biography" to be published as written by "Francis Oldys, A.M. of the University of Pennsylvania". Sloppy scholarship by several subsequent biographers perpetuated much of Chalmer's false portrait of Paine.

A war of words was then on between the British government and Paine. Paine produced what he entitled "KINGSHIP", which really became RIGHTS OF MAN No. II, this one dedicated to Lafayette, in which Paine boldly asserted all monarchies should be abolished, the poor should be subsidized by government, the government should take care of the aged, and poor children should be educated at public expense. It was a book written particularly for the non-privileged citizens of England.

Demand for the book was great all over the literate world. It became the current best seller in British history to the date of its publication in 1791, provoking the frightened Pitt government to impose unusually harsh and repressive measures and censorship. Consistent with his principles, Paine donated all profit from its publication that he could control to various organizations which he thought were doing good work.

When Jefferson, who was then Secretary of State, received a copy, he liked it and sent it to the printer with a note at the top "that something is at length to be publicly said against the political heresies that have sprung up around us", meaning what he perceived to be the Federalists' increasingly expressed antipathy for democracy. Contrary to Jefferson's intent, the printer included Jefferson's note in the printing, resulting in great political embarrassment to Jefferson, particularly in his

relations with John Adams and other Federalists. It also resulted in Paine and his writings becoming a part of the then ongoing struggle between the Federalists and Jefferson's new party.

During 1791 and 1792, Paine was in the London newspapers almost every day, almost always unfavorably. The government initiated prosecution proceedings against the printer of RIGHTS OF MAN. Paine's friends became convinced Paine would surely be next and urged him to leave the country. Paine not only refused to do so, but he expanded his attack on the British government by writing his "LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE ADDRESSERS ON THE LATE PROCLAMATION" in which he openly called for a revolution in England and the abolishment of the monarchy. The British government reacted by issuing a royal proclamation against sedition. Then Paine did flee the country for France. It was not an hour too soon. The authorities arrived with arrest papers a few minutes after he was safely on the boat for France.

In France Paine had been made a special citizen of the French Revolution. He had been graciously welcomed into an elite group of philosophers and politicians, including Condorcet and Bonneville. Lafayette selected Paine as just the right person to deliver the key to the Bastille to President

Washington.* He had not only been made a member of the Convention organized to establish a new French Constitution, but was even appointed to the select committee to draft that new Constitution. However, as the revolution went from one horrible excess to another even more horrible and as the Jacobins, headed by Marat, became in the ascendancy, the revolution became out of control. On January 19, 1793, Paine in an eloquent speech to the Convention tried unsuccessfully to save the king from execution. For this and because Paine had become a member of the Girondins his status in the Revolution became shakey. Although no one believed in the revolution more than he did, the truth was that Paine actually lacked the toughness, the experience as a rough-and-tumble politician, to protect himself in the turmoil of the Convention in that turbulent revolutionary atmosphere. He failed to recognize that the French revolution was not at all similar to the American revolution. He became despondent and gradually came to have little hope that the French Revolution would ever reach any noble purpose. He watched the succession of unpleasant and many times brutal events in disappointment and sadness as a committee of public safety controlled France for a year. Contrary to his principles it reorganized the army, fixed prices and wages, planned the economy, and far worse, it sent many of his friends, one after another, to the guillotine.

* The key now hangs on a wall at Mount Vernon.

Fearing he would soon be executed himself, in the fall of 1793 he started to compose his last great political paper "THE AGE OF REASON", an attack on organized religion. Paine was a deist, not an atheist, as many of his critics asserted. It was his view "We can know God only through His works". God is best revealed in nature. "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life." He sincerely believed in a supreme being but he also felt no need for any religious heirachy to aid him in communicating with that supreme being. "I believe that religious duties consist of doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy." On December 28, 1793, he was arrested on the ground he was an English alien and put in the Luxemburg prison, where for almost a year he continued to work on his paper.

Because for years he had thought of himself as an American, Paine fully expected Gouverneur Morris, one of the important framers of the Constitution, who was then America's representative in Paris, to secure his prompt release. Morris, an aristocrat, who in the past had acted as though he was Paine's friend, actually hated Paine. He deeply resented Paine's success and popularity because he considered him a foreign, uncouth, insobrietous nobody. He assured Jefferson, then Secretary of State, that he had done everything he could do to secure Paine's release, whereas he actually had told Robespierre that Paine was not an American but an Englishman

for whose imprisonment Americans had no concern because Americans detested Paine. Robespierre himself may have had some responsibility for Paine's imprisonment since he feared Paine's pen might be used to alienate America from France. As all communication with prisoners had been terminated, Paine had no contact with the outside world for over six months. Almost every day from March to July of 1794 Robespierre ordered additional prisoners to be executed and every day Paine feared that day might be his last. During this period anyone accused of counter-revolution was denied counsel and had no right to summon witnesses. The judge could only either acquit or sentence to death. Fortunately for Paine, about the time of the end of the great terror of forty-two days in which 1,376 prisoners were executed, two fortuitous events occurred, Robespierre's reign ended and James Monroe was appointed to succeed Gouverneur Morris as America's emissary in Paris.

Monroe not only promptly secured his release from prison, but when Paine arrived at Monroe's home emaciated and seriously ill, Monroe and his wife took Paine into their home, gave him kindness, medical attention, food and every possible consideration for a full year. During this time Paine, particularly after he was restored to health, should have moved on, but delighted with the hospitality he not only enjoyed it but abused it. While being generously treated in Monroe's

home, paid for by the American government, he wrote a most unrestrained vitriolic criticism of President Washington.

While unforgivable, Paine's conduct in writing the letter is explainable. He wrote it because Gouverneur Morris' deceit had reasonably convinced him that, in spite of all he had done for America, its President, his good friend, who he believed could easily have secured his release from the French, did absolutely nothing to help him even when Washington knew, or should have known, he was about to be executed.

No one could continue to be loved by Americans in 1793-1794, and probably at no other time, if he was guilty of attacking organized religion and George Washington. Unfortunately for Paine, the full exploitation of the statements in his letter fit perfectly with the objective of the prevailing Federalist press. The hero worship of Paine by many Americans was turned by the press into disrespect and even real hatred. To his credit Jefferson remained Paine's loyal friend, exposing himself to political damage in the process. When Paine, still in France, first expressed his desire to return to America but also his fear of being captured by the British Navy, Jefferson arranged for an American warship to bring him home. News of this brought opprobrium on Jefferson's head from the Federalist press, even though Paine declined the

invitation. On Paine's return Jefferson again evinced his loyalty by inviting Paine to have dinner in the presidential residence, not just once but a number of times, again exposing himself to the wrath of the Federalist press which excoriated "our atheistic president" for having the nerve to entertain this disreputable "infidel" in the president's home. Whether it was a part of this attempt to discredit Jefferson through Paine or not, at this time a second hatchet job, also purporting to be a biography of Paine, was published by a man appropriately named Cheetham. His book contained many new falsehoods about Paine and reiterated many of the old falsehoods which had been made earlier by Chalmers alias Oldys.

During the rest of Tom Paine's life, he drifted into obscurity. After he had left Monroe's home in Paris, he had lived for an extended period with the Bonnevilles and he had encouraged Mrs. Bonneville and her children to come to America after Bonneville's death. Only Mrs. Bonneville and her sons attended his burial in June, 1809. They were the only beneficiaries of his will.

Thus one of the giants of our revolutionary period silently passed away and the world his pen had shaken took little notice.

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